

Senate Bill 17

Senate Fish and Game Committee

February 20, 2007

Presented by Land Tawney on behalf of the Private Land/Public Wildlife Council

Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the record my name is Land Tawney, representing the Private Land/Public Wildlife Council.

I am here to speak in support of Senate Bill 17. This bill would eliminate the mandatory set-aside and expenditure of a certain percentage of program funds each year for releasing upland game birds. Senate Bill 17 does not prevent Fish, Wildlife, & Parks (FWP) from using funds in the program to release upland game birds, if the Department identifies the need to do so.

Under current law, FWP is REQUIRED to expend a certain amount of funds every year on upland bird releases, whether or not there is a benefit to the release. This is true even if the Department has identified a greater need for funding certain habitat projects that will provide far greater benefits to area game bird populations than stocking pen-raised birds.

During Council deliberations, there was considerable discussion as to whether or not releasing pen-raised birds had any real effect on game bird population numbers over time. Members reviewed data and heard testimony that indicated birds raised in captivity and released into the wild experienced high mortality and low rates of long-term survival. Most Council members felt that improving habitat was a more effective way to provide for sustainable game bird populations than releasing pen-raised birds. However, members also recognized that there might be situations where FWP felt it was necessary or appropriate to release upland game birds.

Senate Bill 17 will allow FWP to determine the best use of funds in this program to obtain the greatest benefit, and allow the Department more flexibility in administering the program.

On behalf of the Private Land/Public Wildlife Council, we ask that you support passage of Senate Bill 17.